



The other side of the story. Colonial politics still shape attitudes to language use in school in Africa. Contrast between South Africa and Mozambique

Michel Lafon

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The other side of the story. Colonial politics still shape attitudes to language use in school in Africa. Contrast between South Africa and Mozambique

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Introduction

In Africa with a few notable exceptions,¹ including Tanzania and to a lesser extent, Madagascar, (ex-)colonial languages generally retain a predominant place at all levels of the education systems,² the part played by 'national' languages differs widely: some countries ignore them while others seek to include them, and this divergence reflects different historical experiences. This is the case of the educational policies of South Africa and Mozambique, prior to Independence and subsequently maintained: in the former, use of African languages was promoted and even obligatory, in the latter it was non-existent, virtually forbidden. These policies informed the attitudes of the population in an essentially negative way, with the resulting paradox that the use of African languages in schools, for which there is provision in South Africa, is widely rejected while it is on the other hand popular with rural communities in Mozambique even though the implementation of the policy raises technical problems.

We shall briefly present these two situations in their historical context.

South Africa: the weight of the past

In South Africa, language policy in education features prominently in the 'final' 1996 Constitution (South Africa 1996d), the result of the transition negotiations between the African National Congress and the National Party.³ The preamble puts 11 languages on an equal footing, all declared official: two European languages (English and Afrikaans), and nine African. Particular emphasis is laid on the recognition and valuing of cultural and linguistic diversity. The Constitution fully recognizes the linguistic rights of the various ethnic groups of the country, including

1 Education is to be understood here exclusively as formal western-style teaching, under the state. Education, meaning the training of the new generations, includes many other forms, often termed informal or traditional (Dasen 2004). There is also, in some parts of Mozambique, Koranic teaching run by the communities involved independently of the state.

2 This policy contrasts sharply with that of North African countries which have their own written tradition and were better able to make a formal break with the colonial legacy and think afresh about the language of teaching. Nonetheless, their policy, based on ideology rather than educational rationale, flows in the face of the plural linguistic and cultural reality of the countries as was the case of 'Arabization' in Algeria (see inter alia Cherad 2010 and Benrabah 2011).

3 The linguistic policy of democratic South Africa has generated many studies, generally showing appreciation of the text itself and its intentions. See inter alia Alexander (1989 and 2003); Heugh (2002); Moyo (2002); Lafon (2006) which gives many references.

those of European origin, and avoids any explicit linguistic imposition.⁴ Article 29 stipulates the right of every child to receive education in the official language or languages of his/her choice, and the State's obligation to satisfy it 'where that education is reasonably practicable,' while laying down, for the first time in the country's history, a compulsory period of 9 years of schooling which hitherto had not applied to Africans (Motala et al. 2007: 2).⁵

The methods for achieving these aims are set out in following sector-specific texts –essentially the National Education Policy Act, 1996–; the South African Schools Act (SASA) 1996; the Norms and Standards for Language Policy in Public Schools in terms of SASA (1996); and the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) (Department of Education 1997)⁶ –along with some provincial laws, as the nine provinces that emerged in 1994 enjoy a relative autonomy. This complex and sometimes contradictory web of laws, regulations, practices, etc., automatically applies to the approximately 26,000 public & state aided schools.⁷ The LiEP, which explicitly links language policy and racial attitudes, gives schools a particular responsibility through its own language policy for the fostering of a non-racial and open society (Preamble Art. 1.3). Schools are positioned as central to the building of the new society.

Who chooses the Languages of Learning and Teaching (LoLTs) and the subject language(s) in any given school? Since 1996 the decision has been decentralized as far as it possibly could be: it falls on each school, through its School Governing Body (SGB), in which Woolman & Fleisch (2009: 166) see for that reason 'a fourth tier of government.' Provincial ministries of education have the duty to check that schools' explicit decisions and practices comply with the provisions of the constitution, as well as sectorial, and in some cases, provincial regulations.

Regarding the language of learning, in addition to monolingual schools, regulations explicitly provide for bilingual schools which are of two kinds: (i) *parallel medium*, where there coexist in the same institutions cohorts of pupils with some using language *x* and others language *y*; (ii) *dual medium*, where, in a single class, some subjects are taught in language *x*, others in language *y* (unless the same subject is being repeated).

Alongside this, a large-scale reform affecting both the curriculum (*Curriculum 2005*) and the teaching approach (*Outcome Based Education, OBE*) was launched in 2000.⁸ All heavy-handed prejudices of the past, which ran contrary to the principles of the constitution, were to be purged. This model, termed 'colour-blind' and

4 It is only right to recognize that the balance of power between the various groups, linguistic diversity – no African language is the mother tongue of more than a third of the population – and the status of the different varieties – none has the prestige of an ancient written culture and religious validation – would not allow for any individual one to be given preferential status.

5 There had been plans to advance by one year as from 2011 the period of obligatory schooling by incorporating year 0, or *grade R* (for *reception*), but for budgetary reasons this measure was postponed. Since the start of the 2011 school year however all state primary schools must open a reception class, but this is not fully funded by the state and parents must pay to register their children.

6 The Ministry of Education website (<http://www.education.gov.za>) gives all laws and regulations in force and much other information. The texts cited here are available at the following addresses: <http://www.education.gov.za/dynamic/dynamic.aspx?pageid=329&catid=12&category=Acts&legtype=1>; <http://www.education.gov.za/Documents/policies/policies.asp>.

7 Without being able to exempt themselves from the provisions of the constitution, Independent (private) Schools are not necessarily concerned by these texts. This article deals only with state-controlled schools.

8 From the very outset there was a polemic over the relevance of such a methodology in the situation of South Africa. After much debate, OBE was revised in 2010 in favour of a 'back to basics' approach.

assimilationist (Marais & Meieir 2008: 186), was aligned on that of western countries, Australia and New Zealand having had a decisive influence (see Carpentier 2005).

What is the actual situation in state schools? The use of a home language is explicitly recommended so as to avoid a linguistic disconnection between home and school and to lay claim to mother-tongue education. As for the eleven official languages, this recommendation appears, on the surface at least, to be widely followed for the first three years which make up the Foundation Phase⁹ as it applies both to the vast majority of European pupils, essentially English- or Afrikaans-speakers¹⁰, and to most African pupils whose first language is an African one: the former go to city schools using English while the latter go to township and rural schools. A growing minority of African pupils, including the children of the elite for whom English has become a home language without their necessarily abandoning an African language, go to English-speaking city schools. Where an African language is the LoLT in the Foundation Phase, English must be introduced no later than the second year, or even, as requested in a 2011 reform, in the first. As from grade 4 (\pm age 10), English becomes the LoLT and the African language is in principle maintained as a subject, in accordance with the policy of 'additive bilingualism.'^{11 12}

This situation obviously gives pupils who speak English and/or Afrikaans at home and who are for the most part white a considerable advantage as they are the only ones who can complete their studies in a language familiar to them. It had been seen as provisional pending the production of materials in African languages that the revived linguistic committees set up by the Constitution were to design. With this in mind, the new programmes, published in English in the early 2000s, were translated into all the other official languages,¹³ and educational publishers were pressed to produce text books.

However, contrary to expectations, African parents are not demanding teaching in 'their' language. Far from it: when given the choice, the majority opt for English as the LoLT as from the first year and even earlier, as evidenced by the proliferation of English-speaking nurseries in townships. Unexpectedly, a significant number of African pupils take Afrikaans as a second language at matric, the school-leaving qualification, rather than their home language, some by choice and others by force of circumstance. A majority of African parents and pupils show negative attitudes towards the use of African languages in schools, which can be better explained by the lasting stigmatization of Bantu Education. This legacy continues to provide a basis for the dichotomy between schools, a dichotomy in which language policy is a central feature.¹⁴

9 The strategy followed in Reception class as from the start of the 2011 year in schools has not been made explicit but is in line with the language policy of the particular school. However, in schools teaching in more than one African language, as is often the case in Gauteng, there are not always separate reception classes and children may be placed in a reception class using language y even though they are to take classes in language x later on.

10 A growing number of Afrikaans pupils attend schools using English.

11 The strategy takes its inspiration from the theory of transfer of capacity acquired in L1 to L2, developed by Cummins (1991) (cited in Hovens 2002).

12 The children of this elite are not necessarily monolingual: in some families they are brought up in a multilingual atmosphere where English is generally part of the equation.

13 *Curriculum Statement & Learning Outcomes*, by level and subject (see www.education.gov.za).

14 For a more detailed analysis, see Lafon (2008a & b).

Bantu Education (1954-1992)

The programme of the National Party which won the 1948 elections was focussed on the introduction of apartheid or 'separate development.' Each of the four racial groups identified (White, Indian, Coloured, Black) was to live in demarcated areas, with their own amenities. This ideological construct was based on the postulate of irremediable cultural differences between a hierarchy of 'races,' and on an unequivocal vision of the relationship between identity, community and language. Education was at the heart of this edifice. Not only was there to be discrimination in schools but, within the black and white groups, linguistic differences. From 1949 onwards, monolingual teaching in the mother tongue became compulsory for Europeans –putting an end to bilingual English/Afrikaans schools which had flourished in the past– as well as for Coloureds and Indians. A similar logic was to apply to Africans as from 1954, when, despite the opposition of vast sectors of society, Bantu Education (BE) was imposed.¹⁵ The government suspended subsidies to mission schools and took over the provision of education. The vast majority of Africans became confined to schools tightly controlled by the State.¹⁶ African languages were the compulsory languages for learning at primary level. At secondary level (standard 5 then standard 7, corresponding to the current Grade 9 –± age 15), there was a brutal shift– what was later called 'subtractive bilingualism' –to English and Afrikaans which were in principle to be used on an equal basis.

BE teaching was repetitive and dull. Programmes, at first narrowly utilitarian, aimed at meeting the immediate labour needs of the white economy and rural African communities (Nyaggah 1980: 65). For African parents, the rationale of BE was evident. It was defined by Luthuli as 'to isolate Africans and convince them of their permanent inferiority' (Luthuli 2006: 35).

In a particularly harmful way, African languages were associated with the setting up of 'pseudo-autonomous' Bantustans (Carpentier 2005: 36) which, under the policy initiated in the 1960s, were to group Africans on an ethnic basis. For Africans living in towns, who, as a whole, objected to being administratively assigned to a Bantustan, it was often the variety that they spoke which, in the eyes of the White authorities, formed the decisive criterion for their ethno-political classification. Instrumentalization of African languages was reinforced in KwaZulu by the introduction of a history textbook in Zulu, Ubanthu Botho, which promoted a monolithic vision of the Inkatha party in power (Golan 1994: 28, 29).

The common linguistic committees of the past were split and placed under the responsibility of the ministry in charge of BE (Heugh [2001]: 14). Terminology was developed so as to heighten differences between varieties raised to the rank of independent languages in a spirit of excessive purism, giving priority to internal lexical creations over borrowings seen as culturally suspect.

To crown it all, while BE led to a widening of access to school among Africans, the disparity in resources reinforced pre-existing inequalities. Between 1969 and 1976, when BE was at its height, for every rand spent on a black pupil, the State spent 15 for a European one (Carpentier 2005: 48) even though schools for Europeans had already benefited from considerable advantages during the colonial period.

¹⁵ On the way in which BE was introduced and reactions to it, see inter alia the collection edited by Kallaway (2002).

¹⁶ Only a few financially independent schools were able to continue (Behr 1978: 180).

Bantu Education became an emblem of apartheid and language policy was one core defining element. Use of African languages, which had hitherto flourished, leading, despite the moral rigidity of the missionaries in command of the presses, to the incipient appropriation of writing witnessed in the 1930s by the burgeoning of literature in the main vernacular languages (see Ricard 2004), became deeply unpopular. It was over the question of the language of instruction that opposition to apartheid crystallized. In 1976, in the then Transvaal (present-day Gauteng), Afrikaans was brutally imposed for some subjects at matric (school leaver's final exam) when, in many schools, this language had not been previously used as language of instruction. This triggered the revolt by Soweto students. The language question, now associated with inequalities in education and the political struggle, took centre stage. In 1979, in an ill-fated attempt at appeasement, the obligation to use Afrikaans was removed and the transition from African languages to English was brought forward by two years, now taking place as from the fifth year of school (Macdonald 1990: 2; Heugh [2001]: 14). The revolt, led by young people, only died down with the political aggiornamento of the 1990s, leading to the freeing of the Roben Island political prisoners and the lifting of the ban on the ANC. In the negotiations to introduce a democratic regime, the abolition of racial discrimination in schools was one of the major issues.

School dichotomy and language use

The transformation of the school system could not be delayed. Those in power wished to maintain the privileged schools, until then virtually reserved for Whites, in the state sector, rather than see them go private. In 1992, the last 'white' government granted these schools independent management so as to limit the hold the future (black) majority government (Woolman & Fleisch 2009: 4) would have on them. They were permitted to levy fees set by each School Governing Body virtually at its own discretion (van Rooyen & Rossouw 2007: 24). In 1994, the 18 separate education systems operating in South Africa were unified within a single national ministry alongside provincial ministries.¹⁷ With no regard for the discrepancy between schools the management model for all of them was made to replicate that of the privileged white schools (Macdonald 1990: 40).

State schools were distributed in 'quintiles,' based (at the outset) on objective criteria according to infrastructure.¹⁸ This categorization determined the amount of state subsidy, redirected towards disadvantaged schools. Since 2007, schools in the two lowest quintiles, and some in the third, have been made free (non-fee paying schools), with an undertaking from the State to allocate the school around 800 rand per pupil per year. But the significant private funding that formerly white schools now have completely neutralized this process, as is shown by Carpentier (2005: 313). He compares the resources of two schools in 1999, each having 1000 pupils. School A, a privileged school, where learners pay 2,500 rand a year, thus receives 2,500,000 rand, while the disadvantaged school B, which asks parents for 50 rand, receives 50,000 rand. State funding, apart from salaries, comes to 196,000 rand for school B and 28,000 rand for school A. There is still a difference of over 2 million rand for school A, which is already ahead in terms of existing inputs (infrastructure, cultural capital, etc). Amounts may have varied over time but the extent of the gap persists.

¹⁷ This included the racially discriminatory systems of white South Africa (European, different ones in each of the four provinces, Indian, Coloured and African, and each Bantustan's own system).

¹⁸ Parents' socio-economic categories were subsequently taken into account.

This situation has led to a dichotomy among state schools ('a bimodal system,' Pretorius 2008) between :¹⁹

- schools formerly reserved for Europeans, located generally in towns, with good infrastructure facilities, computer and documentation rooms in particular; teachers, mainly Whites and Indians, are qualified and the teacher/pupil ratio is often lower than the norm set at 35-40, as the schools can recruit extra teachers from their own budget. These schools, known as 'ex-model C,' account for over 20% of state schools;
- schools formerly for Africans, in townships or rural areas (ex-Bantustans and European farms); while some, especially in townships around big cities, are now decent, in particular those recently built to deal with rural exodus,²⁰ others, in rural areas, are still without water and/or electricity, toilets, fencing, caretakers, etc. All share the same constraints over resources. Despite budgetary efforts and private aid, many of them still lack teaching resources to say nothing of functioning computer rooms, and some have their facilities looted or vandalized.²¹ Pupils often come from very poor families and, in primary schools, many receive a daily meal (under a 'feeding scheme').²² Teachers and pupils are almost exclusively African (or, in some places Coloured). Some of them, products of the BE colleges (closed in 2002), are poorly trained, often with a low level of English –some have never been in extended contact with native speakers of English (Macdonald 1990: 39). Allowing for unfilled vacancies, sickness and absentees, the average teacher/pupil ratio is closer to 1 to 50 or 60 per class than to the ministerial norms.

Rejection of African languages

Language choices are part and parcel of the dichotomy between schools. Since 1992 African parents have been able to enrol their children in the schools of their choice, including ex-model C schools if they have the means or can claim fee exemption.²³ This has led to a rush by African pupils towards these schools, in a search for quality. This is a justified view, in terms of results at least. According to Bloch (2009: 59), the vast majority of matric passes come from around 20% of state schools, and this figure corresponds roughly on the one hand to the whole of ex-model C schools, and to a tiny part of ordinary or African schools, on the other. Rather worryingly, the vast majority of township teachers, even though they are prepared to acknowledge the relevance and importance of using the mother tongue, place their children in the former (Ngcobo 2001; interviews, teachers, Mlazi 2007, Mamelodi and Soweto 2010 & 2011). In these schools, even where learners are mainly, if not wholly, African, and in areas with the same language, and practically monolingual, English wins out with no other option being contemplated, if only

19 This is obviously not an absolute categorization but it sheds light on the debate. An intermediate category is currently emerging, made up of some schools in town centres formerly for Indians, Coloureds and Whites, but now abandoned by them and attended by African pupils from relatively modest families. These social changes have led the ministry to revise the criteria for the distribution of schools into quintiles.

20 The newcomers generally settle in the 'informal settlements' proliferating around the townships, rather than in the older districts, hence the need for new schools.

21 Violence and theft of equipment is a recurring problem in the townships.

22 This scheme is restricted to primary schools.

23 When a school has places, it is obliged to admit children from poor backgrounds when their parents live or work nearby, by granting full or partial remission of fees.

because the majority of teachers are non-Africans.²⁴ As teaching languages (LoLT), African languages remain confined to dysfunctional schools. Moreover, Afrikaans is still most often the second language offered as a subject, with only a minority of schools offering an African language.²⁵ In an attempt to retain parents and avoid closure on account of a lack of learners, some primary schools in townships even choose English as the LoLT from grade 1 (\pm age 7), as this gives an image of quality. And logically enough, to prepare children, private preschools and nurseries boasting of being English-medium are flourishing.

This negative view also proceeds from the lack of progress on the many technical problems faced by African languages for use: choice of a variety when there is often no prestigious variety, discrepancy between school language and spoken language (regional dialect or urban language), the purist approach of the linguistic committees which seek to outlaw borrowings in favour of obsolete terms, marginalization of local vernaculars that are however used in spontaneous code-switching accepted in class but not approved in examinations, and multilingualism in urban areas that make use of the mother tongue problematic.²⁶

So the use of African languages in school remains inextricably associated with poor quality teaching in underperforming schools, whereas English seems to be a condition, if not a guarantee, of better education without the corresponding gain that might have come from the generalization of teaching African languages to all.²⁷

Mozambique: The revenge of the native

Almost uniquely in Africa, the colonial and postcolonial history of Mozambique is characterized by a policy of denigration of local languages and cultures. This was the case of the colonial policy through the promotion of the Portuguese language and way of life through 'assimilation' but also that of the Frelimo party in the first decade following Independence obtained in 1974.²⁸ It was only after the promulgation of a new constitution in 1990, in the context of peace negotiations with Renamo (*Resistência Nacional Moçambicana*), that it was possible to develop educational programmes using local languages. When an experimental 'bilingual education' model was set up in 2002 using local languages as the language for early literacy in primary schools, this programme, despite its many faults, was adopted by the communities concerned and this ensured not only that it was maintained but extended.

We shall examine the key points of this change.²⁹

24 It is right to note that some ex-model C schools tried to introduce African languages as teaching languages but drew back in the face of the difficulty of making a choice given their diversity and the reluctance of African parents, some of whom saw in this move an attempt at re-segregation (Pillay 2009 :81).

25 This is gradually changing. African languages are then offered as 'First Additional Language' (FAL), which is very close to 'Home Language' (HL) level. FAL is designed for native speakers.

26 On account of space constraints, it is not possible to illustrate these points here. See inter alia Webb et al. (2010).

27 There is practically no teaching of African languages for non-native speakers (Second Additional Language, SAL).

28 The *Fronte de Libertação de Moçambique* came to power on Independence in 1974 after a ten-year liberation struggle.

29 The setting up of the bilingual programme is described in greater detail in Lafon (2008b).

The legacy of assimilation³⁰

For reasons which have as much to do with practicality as with ideology, Portugal promoted the so-called assimilation policy in Mozambique, during the period of colonial consolidation.³¹ There were considerable advantages to assimilated status. Besides clerical posts in the administration or in private companies, the assimilated were exempted from forced labour, could travel without permits, were subject to Portuguese courts rather than traditional justice and, most importantly, their children had access to European schools (Honwana & Isaacman 1988: 81 and 91; Moreira 1997: 46). By means of these advantages, the colonial power hoped to win support among the population. To a great extent this calculation proved sound, even if it was also from this group that emerged in the early 20th century the precursor of the nationalist movements, most particularly the Negrofilo association run by Joao Albasini (Honwana & Isaacman 1988: 12-13, 28, 55 and 209; Moreira 1997: 49, 96, 103).

The assimilated were descendants of Portuguese and local women, and/or had been to mission schools and were converted. While the first group were mainly to be found in the areas of the early colonisation in the Zambezi valley, in the 20th century the educated African elite were mainly from the South where the port of Lourenço Marques (Maputo) had been elevated to capital status.

The assimilated were characterized by their adoption of European manners. 'Being assimilated means resembling the Whites' commented Moreira, referring to the first quarter of the 20th century (1997: 50, 103).³²

They had to abandon the most obvious features of traditional practices, particularly polygamy and *lobolo* (payment to the bride's family), initiations, participation in ancestor worship, thus cutting themselves off from their own cultural environment. This came to include, in the latter stages at least, as denounced by Mondlane (1979: 43), the use of African languages. While the Protestant missions from the former Republic of Transvaal that were active from the mid-19th century in the South had used African languages in their schools,³³ producing a tiny bilingual elite able to read and write in both Ronga and Portuguese,³⁴ the colonial power's longing for tight control led it to put severe limitations on them. In 1907, in a protectionist reaction to British economic and political domination, the use of languages other than Portuguese was restricted to the first three years of primary

30 See Newitt (1995) for a history of the country; on assimilation, see in particular Mondlane (1979), Moreira (1997) and the biography of Raúl Honwana annotated by Isaacman (Honwana & Isaacman 1998). Stroud (1999) has a detailed analysis of the role of Portuguese in post-independence national construction.

31 There were two main phases to the colonization of Mozambique. As from the 16th century, the Portuguese crown set up some strongholds on the coast of the north central region and in the estuary and along the course of the Zambezi, making the island of Mozambique the capital. It was only at the end of the 19th century that, confronted with the competition between colonial powers for the sharing out of the continent, Portugal, after long pacification campaigns, managed to establish its control over the whole of what is now Mozambique. Even so, until the mid-20th century, only the South was under its direct authority and that was where the policy of assimilation was in the main developed. The exploitation and administration of vast areas in the centre and north of the country were farmed out to chartered companies with international capital.

32 All translations from Portuguese are based on the author's own.

33 Basically the Swiss Mission, the story of which is found in Harries (2007).

34 Evidence of this is a few bilingual newsheets from that time, most particularly the Negrofilo association's *o Brado Africano*.

schooling, whilst writing in 'Bantu language' was even banned from 1929 (Moreira 1997: 47; Cahen 2000:4; Stroud & Tuzine 1998 in Cumbe & Machanga 2001; Linder 2001: 159). In the 1930s most of the foreign (Protestant) mission schools were transferred to the Catholic Church, deemed more docile, and with which a concordat had been signed in 1940. African languages had no place in their curriculum. As Mondlane observed, 'schools for Africans are primarily agencies for the diffusion of Portuguese language and culture' (1979: 54). This was the death knell for the appropriation of writing in the vernacular which, as was the case in South Africa, appeared to be well under way.

In this way, by adopting the Portuguese Christian way of life and the exclusive use of Portuguese, a fraction of the population became elevated above the indigenous masses, benefiting from a status close to that of the colonists and administrators from the metropolis. The numerical impact of this policy should not be overestimated: just prior to Independence barely a third of children went to school (Gomez 1999: 70-71) and Portuguese was the mother tongue of only about 8% of a population in which less than 10% were literate (Lopes 1998: 465). But this was enough to establish, both among this elite and among the mass of Africans in contact with it and who aspired to escape from an unenviable fate, the prestige of western culture and in parallel, nurture disdain, if not contempt, for local practices. The revocation of assimilation in 1961, with the abolition of forced labour and the extension of citizenship to the entire population (Gomez 1999: 54; O'Laughlin 2000) actually helped to generalize this ideology, if not its practices.

From the inception of the liberation struggle, Frelimo opted for the exclusive use of Portuguese, for at least two reasons: Portuguese appeared to be the only potential common language for activists from diverse and widely separated areas brought together fortuitously by colonization; and many party officials, themselves assimilated, were, by reason of their personal history, ill-at-ease in the face of African languages and cultures. This policy was pursued after Independence and Portuguese from the outset proclaimed as the 'language of national unity.' It was now a matter of strengthening national unity in a particularly unstable country (Stroud 1999: 345) as well as maintaining a linguistic border with English-speaking neighbours (Rothwell 2001). This was a common enough attitude in Africa, but there developed alongside it, in a one-party Marxist-inspired regime, a strange obsession with modernization and the regime settled down to the task of the construction of the 'new man.' Traditional practices were seen as conflicting with a vision of progress reduced to a mere adoption of a western way of life and thought and their very existence was challenged. For Frelimo officials and the state apparatus, 'African languages and cultures [remained] an expression of obscurantism and possible sources of tribal division' (Balegamire et al. 2004).³⁵ By their use of Portuguese alone, they could further prove their commitment to the project of nation-building (Stroud 1999: 354). The use of African languages was banned from all official functions, including the courts (Isaacman 1983: 115).

There seems to be little room for dispute that this attitude of systematic denigration of African practices in the name of modernism came from the adoption and deepening of the ideology of assimilation by the urban classes and the bureaucracy. As Mudiue writes (1999: 37): '(...) Frelimo's modernism was rooted in the policy of assimilation which denied the country's cultural and linguistic

35 This policy shares much with that of Arabization in independent Algeria, described by Cherrad (2010), with the notable difference that in Mozambique the language used is that of the colonizer.

diversity. It aimed at creating the new man, a socialist man (...) supposed to emerge free from any culture and history, other than a perception of the past as hostile.' In this context Gevray speaks of 'blank page' ideology (in Hall & Young 1999: 219).

To make its project a reality and 'raise' the cultural level of the masses, the regime put in place an extensive education programme in which adult literacy training was an integral part. This programme naturally made exclusive use of Portuguese.

Aggiornamento

The civil war, originally stirred up by Ian Smith's Rhodesia with the aim of weakening a regime likely to support liberation movements, was widely supported in some parts of the country especially on account of the frustrations caused by the 'modernization' policy.³⁶ Renamo's programme included a return to practices banned by Frelimo, including the use of African languages,³⁷ and won the support of the traditional chiefs. Schools, seen as instruments of the Frelimo state, were one of the main targets for attack.³⁸ Literacy campaigns, because of insecurity, general disorganization of the state and diminishing enthusiasm, came to a virtual end. With the negotiation process starting in the early 1980s, a new constitution allowing for a multiparty state was proclaimed in 1990 (Governo de Moçambique 1990). This marked a cultural and ideological *aggiornamento* which gradually affected official discourse and education practice. So from the early 1990s onwards, the use of African languages has been accepted for adult literacy, in actual fact widely left to non-state operators (churches, NGOs). A bilingual experiment limited to two African languages ran from 1993 to 1997/98.³⁹ In 1997, it was announced that the experiment would be extended nationwide. This is a 'transitional' model, with the local language used as a medium of instruction for the first three years before being gradually replaced, from the fourth year, by Portuguese, introduced orally from the first year. Fifteen languages covering the whole country were chosen, two languages per province, and the programme was to be launched in 22 pilot schools in linguistically homogeneous areas, out of the 8,000 that were in the country at the time. The model was to spread by 'vertical expansion': each year a higher level was to open – the fourth year to be reached by the start of the 2006 school year – and two new first classes in each school involved.

This strategy was accompanied in 2003 by the localization of part of the content as an aspect of curriculum renewal (*Novo Currículo*).⁴⁰ Local communities were called on to contribute, under a provision for 'life skills.' In principle African languages should also be offered as subjects in monolingual Portuguese education.

Here as elsewhere, the basic motivation seems to be failure in school: between 1992 and 1998, the average rate for repeating in the first five years remains stubbornly at a quarter of pupils (Balegamire et al. 2004) and it is clearly apparent that at the heart of the problem is, in rural areas, a lack of knowledge of the teaching

36 Renamo was set up in 1976 with the support of the Rhodesian secret services (Hall & Young 1998: 117 sq.).

37 Renamo used national languages, in particular Ndaou, the language of the majority of its officials (Stroud 1999: 360; Hall & Young 1999: 174).

38 In 1992, only 3,384 primary schools were operating; by 1980 there were 5,730 (Matusse 1994: 548).

39 This was *Pebimo*, *Programa de Escolarização Bilingue em Moçambique*, described by Benson (2000 and 2001).

40 This is part of a vast decentralization reform, in which increasing responsibilities in all fields are left to local level, including planning and development.

language not only on the part of the children but also the teachers,⁴¹ as is noted by Conceição et al. (1998). 'The question of language is a decisive factor in the teaching and learning process [o processo de ensino-aprendizagem], (...) in that the majority of Mozambican pupils (...) speak a mother tongue other than the medium of instruction.' The Strategic Education Plan 1997-2001, published in 1998, implicitly recognizes the fact (p. 21). This is also claimed by Dias, who casts Portuguese as a vector of inequalities at school, in a work which caused something of a sensation when it appeared (Dias 2002).

Popular enthusiasm in spite of everything: 'expansão selvagem'

This change of direction is a real revolution in a country where the colonial language had acquired symbolic status and become a manifestation of national unity. It overturns beliefs and practices of a teaching profession indoctrinated in the catechism of the inadequacy of African languages for the modern age and triggers scepticism among much of the middle class. It is indeed stipulated that bilingual education is not to be compulsory and parents are free to ask for their child to be transferred to a monolingual class.

However, from its very inception, the experiment elicited enthusiasm and pride from the communities concerned, leading to its extension from 22 to 32 schools.⁴² By 2005, 4200 pupils were involved in BE. This unplanned extension process ('expansão selvagem' in INDE's parlance⁴³) has since speeded up. Estimates are that in 2010 over 200 out of total of around 12,000 schools were involved, with the participation of some 28,000 pupils.⁴⁴ The programme is however suffering from many weaknesses, in particular as regards (i) the choice of languages, which is partly arbitrary, (ii) problems and disputes over how they are taught in terms of both spelling and terminology, (iii) lack of books and teaching materials⁴⁵, (iv) lack of training among teachers, (v) an absence of monitoring and support from the centre, difficulties only resolved occasionally thanks to the support from NGOs, INDE's capacities being overwhelmed by the scheme's very success. This innovative experiment faces a background of minimal human, logistic and financial resources. This is worsened by a great widening of access to primary education (between 1997 and 2003, the number of children at school rose from 1.7 to 2.8 million – MEC 2005) entailing, as the authorities themselves admit, a lowering of an already very modest quality. It might appear paradoxical to prioritize African languages when the most basic conditions for teaching Portuguese are not met. It is by no means sure that the bilingual education situation is worse than that of monolingual education. Balegamire et al. (2004) point out however that it is harder to have funds allocated to the bilingual programme paid out. The programme on the other hand facilitates

41 The same applies to literacy training: in 1998 barely 42% of an estimated population of 17 million was regarded as literate (*Recenseamento geral da população* de 1997, according to the *Instituto de Estatística* website).

42 At the request of local communities, Mwani was added in Cabo-Delgado and Ndau, originally chosen only in the provinces of Manica & Sofala, in Inhambane (information obtained from A Dhorsan).

43 Founded in 1978, the *Instituto Nacional de Desenvolvimento da Educação* is tasked with educational research, in particular curriculum design. The INDE has borne responsibility for the bilingual programme during its experimental phase.

44 According to a 2009 statistical survey, communicated by INDE V Bisquet.

45 Until the start of the 2010 school year, no text books were available in languages other than those supported by Progresso, and teachers worked with photocopies of the first, unamended, version. On Progresso, see Lafon (2004).

parental involvement, with the removal of the linguistic obstacle, and is therefore better socially integrated. Lastly, and so long as the experiment remains limited to rural areas, there are not, as there are in South Africa, significant differences between schools, based on the language of instruction.

The widespread and consistent popular support in rural areas stems, in our view, not so much from improved educational or professional outcomes, which, in any event, take time to verify, as from the satisfaction of seeing one's language and culture acknowledged and validated by system that had rejected them. This programme signals the long-denied acceptance of a plural identity, integrating those that were excluded from the modern nation. In fact, even if it remains superficial, the discourse has changed. African practices and traditions are no longer a laughing stock for the urban elite, Bantu linguistics has its place in the University and is an integral part of teacher training, and a revision of the constitution has been announced which accommodates African languages (Lafon, forthcoming), as the 2004 constitution in force reproduces earlier provisions on language (Governo de Moçambique 2004). These subtle changes undoubtedly mark the beginnings of a new balance in the dialectic between assimilation and Africanity. However, this programme has its own limits: the extension to urban areas looks problematic especially on account of their multilingual nature. Moreover, the teaching of African languages as subjects in monolingual Portuguese education still lags behind. Despite being envisaged in 1997, nothing has come to fruition. It would however allow for a better integration of the whole of the population.

Conclusion: what can be learnt for Mayotte?

Highly contrasting popular reactions in South Africa and Mozambique to comparable educational strategies reflect first and foremost, it would seem, a desire to break away with a legacy of imposition. As shown by Bunyi for Kenya, the population is basically taking a stance counter to colonial policies: 'there was a push from ordinary Kenyans for everything that had been denied them by the colonialists' (Bunyi 1999: 342).

So in South Africa the use of African languages still brings to the mind of many the hated apartheid Bantu Education policy, a memory from which the country is still unable to free itself. Because of this, and with African languages still confined to dysfunctional schools, parents are reluctant and call on the contrary for an early use of English. In Mozambique on the other hand, the introduction of African languages in schools, breaking markedly with earlier practice, arouses enthusiasm in the communities concerned.

What will happen in Mayotte, with its highly complex educational arrangements? There coexist, in the field of education, the French metropolitan school system which is now generalized and uses French exclusively, and the traditional Koranic system using Arabic besides spoken use of local varieties (Shimaore and Shibushi); the population is vaguely aware of experiments in using 'national' languages during the 'revolutionary' periods that shook Madagascar and the Comoros themselves in 1974 or the more stable ones run in nearby English-speaking countries, Tanzania and Kenya, not to mention the modern Koranic system based on Arabic, envisaged at one stage in the Comoros. Politically, the situation is complex: the quasi-unanimous wish for becoming part of France as expressed in the 2009 referendum on departmentalization does not negate a claim to belong to the Muslim community or the acknowledgment of the cultural and human links with the

neighbouring islands of the Comoros and Madagascar.

In this context, the linguistic options for schools may easily express political positioning. The moral emerging from the concrete cases reported here suggests that, in order to go beyond possible conflicts of allegiance and avoid choices proceeding from partisan preferences, focus must be kept on the educational and cultural realities, with some flexibility to adapt to situations which may vary from village to village and even school to school, with a constant care for educational quality.

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